6/4/73

Dear Mr. Hash,

Everyone makes a bigh thing of "tell it as it is" but prefers it as it isn't. In the assassinations field this is quite conspicuous. I have learned that the least welcome is reality.And those not prepared by background or the enormous amount of hard work required to comprehend what the reality is wind up resenting what they are told and those who tell it.

With this introduction, I say I can't in good conscience be part of your project, whether it is " along feature article on Penn Jones" or some other assassination writing I haven't seen.There has been a tremenduous overflowing of the literary sewer on this subject. It makes everyone stink.

All the attention given to the nuts and their paranoid writing and speaking has destroyed everyone's credibility.

I suggest that you don't know enough if you think you can write "an objective study of the man and his mission" unless you intend to defame him. That I will not do, much as I have cause.

Penn has become paranoid. He sees conspiracy in fleecy clouds. Everyone who thinks other than he does is some kind of federal agent.I have had this experience, as I have with his paranoia. The net result of his many excesses is that our credibility is gone wherever his garbage has been seen by opinion-influencers and had some of the projects of which he was part succeeded, we 'd be worse off than we are.

This may seem strong to you, but you'll have to take it or leave it because I work too long a day to try and overcome your lack of knowledge where you so clearly have a personal opinion that can't be based upon both solid fact and rational analysis. It is not that Penn is neither personable nor brave. I liked him very much before I met him and more after I did. He has no monopoly on personal courage, either in this field or as the editor of a small weekly.

The thing for which he is best know, the mysterious deaths, is an example if you can make a dispassionate analysis. Can all those deaths be sinister? I stopped telling him of those of which I learned because he became so irrational and extreme. He has taken a legitimate question and made reasonable and rational examination of it an impossibility for those who control what people read and think.

Moreover, his "investigations" are nightmares and generally non-existent. One trip to Dallas I took him around with me. The number of people he hadn't even spoken to was astounding. I found no single one unwilling to talk, to me and although a total stranger, had no trouble finding those Penn and others couldn't. And didn't. Moreover, I don't know of anything he has done that can be called an investigation, not honestly.

There remains what should not be publicized, a fiction, that he has done this great thing. He was on the scene, had means, and has done nothing of any real value of which I know. He is great for setting uncontrolled imaginations soaring out of sight and he was great for turning off those who had information we could use.

Those of you who have ideas of your own to begin with and lack the knowledge for any dispassionate assessment are taken by the attention he has gotten, which was never warranted by anything he did in this field. He is a public-relations creation, not an investigator. It and the fact that long ago he crossed that thin line into irrationality are great tragedies, because he was a great guy.

So, I tell you candidly that if your succeed in selling an article on Penn to any publication, you will have succeeded in doing a great disservice to the work to which you say you are devoted. If you do something of which you could not be ashamed,a

defamation will result. If you do the kind of piece you have in mind, you will do seriousninjury to real work on the subject and you will further reduce the slight credibility that remains to seriousworkers as a consequence of t hose who have be so loudly irrational and factually so wrong.

Or, I hope you will forget it. If you really knew enough to write about the assassination you'd never have thought of this project.

Sturgis: we know too little about him. We know that he was one of the current gestapo and became anti-Castro. Almost anything else is conjecture at this point. There is more that will probably come out, but whether this will deal with the assassination or whether he had any connection, no matter how remote, is a question. It is my recollection that his sole established connection is with the investigation of the assassination, not the crime itself. He was asked about some rumors about Oswald being in the Miami area. If as you seem to say you know of the fact that puts him in association with Ferrie and Oswald it is unknown to me and I would certainly like to see it.

There is something going on in Houston now that interests me much, the grand jury investigation of the Mexican Watergate money. I'd appreciate any news stories on this you could send me. The papers hereabouts have carried only the report that there is such an investigation.

I anticipate you will not welcome what I have said about Penn and your project. However, I owe you and the work honesty. I have told it to you the way it really is.

There will never be any possibility of getting the truth accepted if thereis not an and to all this journalistic trash. The most recent example is that raving maniacal crook Skolnick and his wild and entirely unsupported charges about the plane crash in which E. Howard Hunt's wife was killed. This plays into the hands of those who want and cause evil and destroys credibility of any questioning. There are ample grounds for questioning, but with a Skolnick to get attention with the paranoia, who will touch that area? The Washington Post just did two large artciles effectively laying his stuff in a belated grave. But his hurt goes marching on. He has laid the basis for eliminating <u>any</u> questions about the crash.

Excuse the haste and the typos.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg